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A New Force in Education and Life

By WILLIAM L. TOMLINS, CHICAGO, ILL.

An address delivered at the meeting of The Wisconsin Teachers' Association

We see all about us certain men and women who possess a vital something which, entirely apart from what they say or do, distinguishes them from the ordinary run of human beings.

This unique quality is variously referred to as temperament, as personal presence, as spirit; so that we say of a person, possessing it, that he has a winning personality, a marked individuality, or a wonderful spirit.

We have given this strange power very little consideration. This, probably, is because it is not easily understood and classified as are the common objectives of knowledge and action. And, since it eludes us, we disregard it. We prefer to put it aside as something mysterious; something with which a few favored ones are born, but with which the rest of us have nothing to do.

But in this we are mistaken. Indeed we are coming to find that this intangible something; this spirit, being—call it what you will—is a part of each and every one of us, as much so as our eyes and hands; that without it our powers are crippled so that we are unable rightly to carry on our part in the work of the world.

When we come generally to recognize and cultivate this latent power within us we shall discover in it an energy far transcending our present ones. It is by means of this great reality of life in us that we may nullify much of the confusion and unrest from which the whole world is now suffering.

Although there are doubtless many ways of approach to these deeper powers in us, it has been found that the simplest and most readily available way is through the use of the song voice. Not the voice as commonly used in concert or opera performance, but as the spontaneous expression of heart and soul in our aspiration of life. For this reason we may find profit in considering for a brief space of time the relation of music and song to this deeper life within us.

It is not so long ago—ten years, perhaps—that the movement for Community singing sprang up and spread itself all over the country. No one seems to know just where it began or how it spread. It was in the air, everywhere. Men and women in our cities and towns and rural communities: coming from farms and factories, from mines and rolling mills,—multitudes of them who had never sung or even thought of doing so, were suddenly eager to come together and sing.

It was not that these people desired to learn music or to perform to audiences of listeners. They wanted song for its own sake; to sing for and with each other. It seems as if some new life had come to them which they had never known of, and that this new life within them—seeking expression—was calling on song-voice as a means of utterance.

I believe that this movement for community singing; starting in humble life close to the soil, as all great movements do that are destined to uplift the race, is a part of a great clarion call which a Higher Life Power is making to us to come together and unite on a broader basis of living. I believe, too, that it belongs to a simpler and nobler order of life which is destined to take the place of much of the old order of things which the war has helped sweep away.

The great conflict now raging is between materialism and spirit. Between to have and to be; between having and being. They are opposites. They are like the inner and outer lines of a curve—concave and convex. The idea of the outer life is to get; of the inner life, to give. To have a loaf of bread or any material thing one must first *get* it; while to have love or any other spiritual thing, one must first *give* it. And the more one gives of these spiritual things, the more one has. This is why they are universal and imperishable.

In our estimate of life, however, we lay stress on the values of knowing and doing. They at once come into view and are easily appraised. Therefore in education our efforts are directed mainly to teaching the child to know and to do things. Unfortunately the results in no way compare with the time and money expended. Consequently, educators are making constant efforts to devise better methods of teaching the child to know and to do. But, necessary as knowing and doing are in education, do they after all deserve the attention they receive? Ought not the problem to be attacked at a new and more central point of approach?

I hold that the vital concern of education lies deeper than knowing and doing. It, indeed, goes down to the very being of the child on which doing and knowing rest, and out of which all knowing and doing proceed.

It is this unconscious bubbling over the inner *being* that gives to childhood its perennial charm. As we never tire of Nature so we never tire of children. Each new generation is just as fresh and winsome, just as interesting as the preceding.

Every teacher knows that, better than to *do* things, the child loves to *be* them,—to play being the bear, the wind, the tree. This is instinctive in him; it is his response to the ever-present appeal which Nature is making, beguiling him to come in touch with her and share her store of life.

Thus, each new experience assimilated, enriches the child's being, and the process builds what we know as his personality. He must be somebody before he can be of use to anybody.

But the life thus given the child is not fully his own, does not become really a part of the child until he in turn has shared it with his fellows.

Thus there is the great moral purpose of the child's sharing his being with others. Children live in a general state of exchange. They enter each other's lives; they share each other's being, and as each gives himself to others he is not impoverished but enriched; he becomes a greater individual. Nor is the process-circle complete until they all unite, and in song give back to Nature out of their joy-expanded lives.

All this is brought about with the little children who as yet are innocent of anything like morality, have no sense of responsibility; lack serious purpose, and can do nothing with skill or certainty. Yet each of these little ones—imaginative, sympathetic, companionable—has stored within him heaps and heaps of life capable of being unfolded. Out of this glorious, priceless being flow his knowledge and action as light and warmth from the sun.

As each planetary system has its central source of power, so each child has his centre in which he touches the forces of the universe, the source of his unique individuality, his being—what he *is*. This is the heritage of every child, and the time is at hand when he must come into it for the world's sake as well as his own.

To awaken in the boy a larger sense of his being will give the present school curriculum greater fruition, because more being carries with it a greater ability to know and to do. We must not allow ourselves, however, to regard our being as merely tributary to what we say and do. The highest reward of *being* is in itself; is in its *becoming*.

There are realms and realms of being which await our possession, use and enjoyment. Our path of progress lies before us,—an ascent. Each and every step in that path must be an act of self-expression. It is essential to recognize, however, that our so-called self-expression is not really self-expression, and that nothing we know or do will help us, if we fall short of expressing this vital being within us at whatever point we have attained.

Now the basis of self-expression, in whatsoever form it is to take, is in our vivid recognition of the all-pervading, all-embracing life which is everywhere, and of which each and all of us are a part. So, wherever the scene of the song

is laid—in this or that land; whatever the character personified—a shepherd sailor, mountaineer; and however the moods of the song may vary in accordance with its time, place and circumstance, there must always be voiced the singer's own sense of this all-prevailing life, with its worth and joy. Thus Pippa's song: "God's in His heaven; all's right with the world."

And this abiding sense of the fullness and joy of life must be channeled in its expression along three distinct lines of vital activity; as follows:

- a) As the singer goes out in companionship with his fellows;
- b) As he comes in touch with Nature all about him;
- c) As he gives himself to the things of God, in terms of justice, freedom, honor, love and loyalty.

In this way much of the present waste in the schools is eliminated. For, in transforming knowledge-units into life-units the class room products are no longer dissipated, but are conserved and raised to higher values. Moreover they are made a part of the pupil's personality. By means of certain breath, and rhythmic, exercises they are *set* in him, so to speak, as colors are set in a fabric so that they won't wash out.

Franklin K. Lane, Secretary of the Interior, says: "The man who knows how knowledge can be converted into power is the man for whom there is unlimited call. So it is increasingly to be. . . . Each man's rights are to be measured not by what he has, but by what he does with what he has. To be useful is the essence of Americanism, and against the undeveloped resource, whether it be land or man, the spirit of this country makes protest."

There is danger, however, in the idea that the uses of life are to be reserved for material things. To be practical in the fullest sense of the word we must take into account that priceless, inner being to which these outer material means are meant to minister.

It is not enough, then, to train mind and hand together. Back of them is the realm of motive—the spirit of the thought and action. How many men there are, with developed hands and trained minds; who know so much and can do so many things, but who are a menace to the community because their motives are bad. No, mind and hand and spirit must go together. In other words the mind must be broadened to train with both hand and spirit.

Gleanings From the Field

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Replying to your recent letter, we did not have a paper at our Music Section of the W. E. A. which would be of wide enough interest for publication in the Journal. I believe a general report would be better this time. In our state only one session from 2 to 4 p. m. is allowed for section meetings. This meeting was preceeded by an informal lunch from 12 to 1:30 which was attended by about twenty supervisors and school music teachers. The program consisted of a very practical, intelligent demonstration of the Talking Machine in the Grades, by Miss Edith Rhett; a demonstration with class of high school Harmony by Miss Jessie Belton of Bremerton; a short talk in correlation by Miss Rossinau of Ellensburg; a paper outlining the Seattle plan for Grade Orchestras and Instrumental Classes by Mr. Edwin Knutzen of Seattle; and a demonstration of Eurythmics by Mrs. McCay of Seattle. It was a full, rich program but there was no one paper that I would think justified publication for it was so largely local.

Really the most interesting thing that happened during the Association for public school music was the dinner given by the Western division of the State Music Teachers' Association in compliment of the School Music profession, with a program following, the topic of which was "Cooperation between Studio and Public School Teachers." There were present twenty-eight public school people